

LawHelp: Increasing Private Attorney Involvement

The LawHelp system developed by Pro Bono Net offers powerful, time-tested tools for recruiting, supporting and retaining large numbers of pro bono lawyers in your state's access to justice system. Here are some highlights:

- LawHelp now supports 8 state advocate sites and 5 national practice areas, with nearly 20 new states launching in 2004-05. These locations now support:
 - 15,000 registered advocates of whom nearly ***10,000 are private attorneys***
- LawHelp has powerful tools for:
 - Recruiting lawyers
 - Placing new opportunities
 - Providing online access to the best training and support materials
 - Connecting volunteers to experts in legal aid programs
 - LawHelp's pro bono tools played a critical role in New York's September 11th legal relief efforts. "Given the scale here, it is preposterous to think that this relief effort could have happened without probono.net." *Public Service in a Time of Crisis: A Report and Retrospective on the Legal Community's Response to the Events of September 11, 2001.*
- Large law firm pro bono programs are enthusiastic users of the system.
 - 3,000 lawyers from the top 200 largest firms in the United States are registered users
 - ***97 of the top 100 firms have lawyers registered on advocate sites***
 - The vast majority of top 200 firms are headquartered in LawHelp states
 - "Probono.net made it easy not just to think about getting involved, but to act right away." Junior lawyer at large national law firm
- Huge potential for increasing service from large firms
 - Total number of pro bono hours reported by the 200 largest firms is just ***over 3 million hours in 2002***. This represents nearly ***\$600,000,000 of donated services*** (using \$200 per hour).
 - Significant increases in law firm participant rates are possible: less than a quarter of the 200 largest firms report average pro bono hours per lawyer in excess of one common benchmark: Model Rule of Professional Conduct 6.1, which calls for each lawyer to dedicate at least 50 hours per year to pro bono.
 - Even modest increases in the hours and participation rates of private lawyers in large firms will have an enormous impact on the ability of the

poor to receive adequate legal assistance. *Hundreds of thousands of hours and dollars of additional service could be delivered.*

- Practitioners in small firms also large users of the system
 - 7000 private attorneys from firms other than top 200 are registered
 - Small firm practitioners need the support and tools even more than large firm lawyers
 - Local bar associations are active, enthusiastic partners in existing locations– New York, Montana, San Francisco, D.C. and Minnesota
 - “[W]ith the online accessibility of Pro Bono Net I began to receive inquiries from lawyers practicing outside the world of large law firms who also want to do pro bono work, the result has been a steady stream of new cases placed – that means more individuals receiving the help they need to stay safely out of harm’s way.

“In addition to the rising number of cases placed, I can also direct these volunteers immediately to the *Asylum* site’s online library of training and resource materials, where they will find everything they need to initiate and process their clients’ cases.” *Amy Schroeder Ireland*, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, which runs a volunteer program that represents asylum seekers.

- Pro Bono Expertise
 - Many of the staff at PBN have extensive experience managing well-respected pro bono programs and are available to consult with programs in LawHelp states about how to use technology to increase private attorney involvement.